

HOMELAND SECURITY



Highlights of [GAO-06-1076](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Protective Service (FPS) through its control centers (MegaCenters) helps provide for the security and protection of federally owned and leased facilities. This report (1) identifies the services MegaCenters provide, (2) determines how FPS assesses MegaCenter performance and whether FPS links MegaCenter performance measures to FPS-wide measures, and (3) examines how MegaCenters and selected organizations compare in the services they provide. To address these issues, GAO reviewed FPS's performance measures and past MegaCenter assessments, assessed the MegaCenters' performance measures, and interviewed officials and collected relevant information at FPS, the four MegaCenters, and nine selected security organizations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Homeland Security direct FPS to (1) establish MegaCenter performance measures that meet the attributes of successful performance measures, (2) develop a performance measure for the MegaCenters that corresponds to the FPS-wide performance measure of response time, and (3) routinely assess the extent to which MegaCenters meet established performance measures. DHS generally agreed with the findings and recommendations in this report.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-1076.

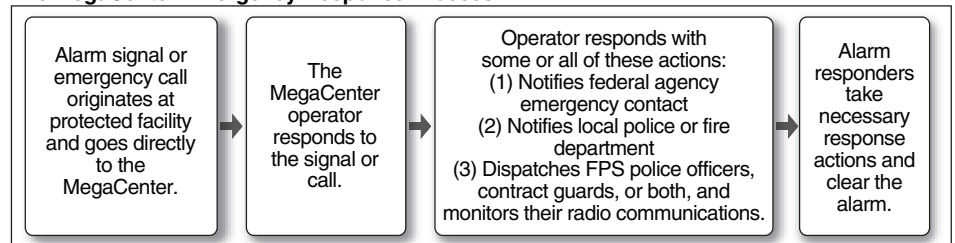
To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mathew Scire at (202) 512-2834 or sciremj@gao.gov.

Federal Protective Service Could Better Measure the Performance of Its Control Centers

What GAO Found

FPS MegaCenters provide three primary security services—alarm monitoring, radio monitoring, and dispatching of FPS police officers and contract guards. These and other services are provided around the clock from four locations—Battle Creek, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Suitland, Maryland. With a fiscal year 2006 budget of \$23.5 million, the MegaCenters monitor alarms at over 8,300 federal facilities, covering almost 381 million square feet, and have available for dispatch over 7,800 FPS police officers and contract guards.

The MegaCenter Emergency Response Process



Source: GAO analysis of FPS data.

FPS MegaCenter managers assess MegaCenter operations through a variety of means, including reviewing data about volume and timeliness of operations, listening to and evaluating a sample of calls between operators and FPS police officers and contract guards, and receiving informal feedback about customer satisfaction. FPS managers have also developed performance measures for assessing MegaCenter operations. However, these measures are of limited use because they are not always clearly stated or measurable and do not address governmentwide priorities of efficiency, cost of service, and outcome—which are among the attributes that GAO has identified for successful performance measures. In addition, the MegaCenters do not measure a key activity—the time from alarm to officer dispatch—that would link MegaCenter performance to an FPS-wide performance measure of response time. Without a corresponding measure, FPS is limited in its ability to evaluate the MegaCenters' contribution to the FPS-wide measure of response time.

Nine selected security organizations—including federal and local police and private entities—offer some of the MegaCenters' services as well as provide and assess these services in a manner that is generally similar to the MegaCenters. Like the MegaCenters, many of the selected organizations have centralized their operations. They also use regular call reviews and volume and time measures to assess the quality of the services they provide. A major difference between the MegaCenters and some selected organizations is the use of a computer-aided dispatch system, which enables these organizations to automate many functions.